

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

S E C R E T MOSCOW 1376

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TAGS: FPOR, CH, UR

SUBJ: SINO-SOVIET TENSIONS

1. WE ARE STRUCK BY SEVERAL RECENT HINTS THAT THE SITUATION ON THE SINO-SOVIT BORDER MAY HAVE WORSENERD IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. FROM THE SOVIET SIDE, CPSU SECRETARY AND IDEOLOGIST BORIS PONOMAREV IN JANUARY 28 SPEECH (MOSCOW 1310) SAID THAT "THE BELLICOSE ASSERTIONS OF PEKING ARE ACCOMPANIED BY TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION, BY THE MAINTENANCE OF TENSIONS ON THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER AND BY EXTENSIVE MILITARY PREPARATIONS." THIS REMARK FOLLOWS BY TWO DAYS THE COMMENT BY A LENINGRAD PUBLIC LECTURER THAT IN 1974 THE CHINESE CONTINUED " 'HOOLIGAN' ACTIONS ON THE BORDER, WHERE THE SITUATION REMAINS VERY TENSE" (LENINGRAD 104, PARA 5). THE

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THIRD SOVIET ITEM WAS IN A COMMENTARY BY S. TOSUNYAN,

IZVESTIYA CORRESPONDENT IN BONN, ON THE STRAUSS VISIT TO PEKING (IZVESTIYA JANUARY 21). TOSUNYAN SAID, "PUTTING FORTH TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST THE USSR, THE MAOISTS, IN AGREEMENT WITH STRAUSS'S CONCEPTIONS, HAVE ALREADY STARTED ON THE PATH NOT ONLY OF WORDS BUT OF DEEDS."

2. FROM THE CHINESE SIDE, CHOU EN-LAI'S SPEECH TO THE NPC MAY HAVE IMPLIED THAT INCIDENTS ALONG THE BORDER HAVE BEGUN AGAIN, ALTHOUGH THE TIMEFRAME OF HIS REFERENCES IS NOT SPECIFIC (HING KONG 777, PARA 3).

3. MONGOLIAN PARTY CHIEF TSEDENBAL, WRITING IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF THE SOVIET JOURNAL "PROBLEMS OF THE FAR EAST," DENOUNCED ALLEGED PRC EFFORTS OVER MANY DECADES TO INCORPORATE MONGOLIA INTO THE PRC. IN SPECIFIC TERMS, HE CHARGED THAT SMALL GROUPS OF CHINESE SOLDIERS HAD CROSSED THE MONGOLIAN BORDER TO A DISTANCE OF 15-20 KILOMETERS, HAD KILLED ANIMALS, CUT DOWN TREES, STARTED FIRES AND BROUGHT IN DISEASED LIVESTOCK. TSEDENBAL DID NOT INDICATE WHEN THESE ALLEGED INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE NOR DID HE HINT THAT ANY MILITARY CONFRONTATION OCCURRED.

4. TAKEN SEPARATELY, THESE ITEMS MAY NOT MEAN MUCH, SIMPLY REFLECTING THE CONTINUED COLD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND THEIR NORTHERN NEIGHBORS. BUT TAKEN TOGETHER, ESPECIALLY THE PONOMAREV AND LENINGRAD REMARKS, THEY MAY REFLECT AN INCREASE IN TENSIONS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED CLASHES.

5. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE RECALL THE TERMINOLOGY OF BREZHNEV'S ULAN BATOR SPEECH (NOVEMBER 26) IN WHICH HE IN EFFECT DENIED THAT THERE ARE "DISPUTED TERRITORIES," AND CHARGED THE CHINESE WITH CONCOCTING THE IDEA IN ORDER TO TAKE OVER SOVIET TERRITORY (MOSCOW 17847, PARA 2). AT THE TIME, THIS SEEMED MERELY TO BE A STRONG REJOINDER TO THE CHINESE CALL FOR MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL FROM DISPUTED AREAS, VOICED IN THE PRC GREETINGS OF NOVEMBER 6. BUT IN THE LIGHT OF THESE

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MORE RECENT COMMENTARIES, IT MAY REFLECT A TOUGHENING OF THE SOVIET STANCE AND A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN TENSIONS. MATLOCK

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